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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0572

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 002587

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STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA, PM

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, NEA/IR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR KPAO OPRC PTER I2 IR CI

SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REACTION - IRAQ

¶1. On December 18, business and financial "Diario Financiero" (circ. 30,000) carried a column by international commentator Libardo Buitrago entitled "Iraq: Peace Options." Quote:

"It took President Bush three years...to realize that the war in Iraq cannot be separated from the regional context.... The Baker Commission concluded that the complex equation today must include Syria and Iran.... To realists, Iran and Syria are potential allies in the stabilization of Iraq; to many Republicans that would mean yielding to terrorists. Bush does not need to implement what the (commission) report recommends, but it does offer him a chance to correct the path of his unsuccessful war strategy -- one that already has cost him an unprecedented decrease in popularity and a tough electoral defeat in Congress, and could cost his party the 2008 Presidential election."

KELLY